

Are Christian Sexual Ethics Irrational?

By Thomas K. Johnson

Introduction: For the last century western intellectuals have often rejected Judeo-Christian sexual ethics for several related reasons:

1. They are seen as irrational and arbitrary.
2. They are seen as the source of senseless guilt.
3. They are seen as restrictive of natural freedom.

In the place of biblically informed sexual ethics, the post-Christian west has often substituted an “ethics of consent,” which says that sexual actions are morally acceptable if all the participants give their consent to the actions.

The “ethics of consent” came to cultural prominence through the “Sexual Revolution” of the late 20th century. This has led to several practices:

1. Social acceptance of frequent divorce.
2. Social acceptance of cohabiting.
3. Social acceptance of child-bearing without marriage.
4. Social acceptance of sex outside of a long-term relationship.

The new contribution to this discussion is the serious study of sexuality by the social sciences, sociology and psychology.

Summary: Human life flourishes and people experience a higher level of personal happiness and multi-generational well-being if they practice life-time marriage and keep sexual relations within marriage.

This compilation of the studies in the social sciences is derived from David G. Myers.

Myers claims the “Sexual Revolution” marked the transition from moderate individualism to radical individualism across western culture.

He interprets the Sexual Revolution as the bearer of an important myth: People should cohabit, should live together, to see if they are compatible for marriage. This myth has been decisively debunked by many recent studies in the social sciences.

1. Cohabiting people consistently report that they are not as happy as married people. They do not enjoy the fact that a happy marriage is the largest contributor to general life happiness.
2. Cohabiting partners report that their sex is less physically and emotionally satisfying than married partners.
3. Numerous studies in several western countries have found that couples who cohabit before marriage have much higher divorce rates.
4. There are much higher rates of domestic violence in cohabiting homes than in married families.
5. Women tend to get hurt financially when cohabitation replaces marriage.

Divorce also has numerous destructive effects on the various parties:

1. Frequent depression for men and women, for 15 or more years after the divorce.
2. Divorce often precedes poverty.

3. Divorce has terrible effects on the health of both people; it shortens a person's life almost as much as smoking.
4. There are much, much higher levels of child abuse and incest in merged families, where step-parents are raising children who are the biological offspring of their partner's previous partner.
5. Boys who grow up without their fathers have a very strong tendency toward delinquency and crime. This is the "invasion of barbarians."
6. Children from divorced homes and unmarried mothers have a broad package of educational and psychological problems: much more frequent problems finishing school, higher rates of depression, and much higher rates of alcohol or drug abuse.

Myers affirms a "transcultural ideal: children thrive best when raised by two parents who are enduringly committed to each other and to their child's welfare."

This does not prove that Christian sexual ethics are given by God; but it fits with the Christian claim that biblical sexual ethics are built-in to human nature. It shows them to be very sensible and so strongly conducive to human well-being that an intelligent atheist should want to largely follow Christian sexual ethics.

TJ